

## Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAM-01 SAI-01 DRC-01 /057 W

----- 010825

R 161628Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4805

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: HEATH RESPONDS TO WILSON

REF: (A) LONDON 13403; (B) LONDON 13402

1. SUMMARY. CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER HEATH, LOOKING  
SELF-ASSURED AND RELAXED, GAVE OPPOSITION'S VIEWS ON  
PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT IN "EQUAL TIME" TELEVISION  
BROADCAST OCTOBER 15. HEATH SAID WILSON HAD ACCEPTED  
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CONSERVATIVE CONCLUSIONS ON DIRE STATE OF ECONOMY AND

THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY. HE PROMISED COOPERATION FROM THE CONSERVATIVES FOR POLICIES TO SOLVE ECONOMIC CRISIS, BUT EMPHASIZED WATCHFUL EYE CONSERVATIVES WOULD BE KEEPING ON THE NEW LABOR GOVERNMENT. HE LISTED CERTAIN AREAS ON WHICH CONSERVATIVES WOULD BE WATCHING ACTIONS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT. REFERRING TO HIMSELF FOUR TIMES DURING FIVE-MINUTE SPEECH AS "LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY," HEATH SEEMED TO BE SAYING HE HAD NO IMMEDIATE PLANS OF STEPPING DOWN, BUT HE AVOIDED SPECIFIC COMMENT ON SPECULATION ABOUT HIS REPLACEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONSERVATIVES DEMANDED "EQUAL TIME" TO RESPOND TO WILSON'S FIRST POST-ELECTION NATION-WIDE SPEECH (REF A). PARTY LEADER HEATH, LOOKING RESTED, RELAXED, AND SELF-ASSURED, GAVE FIVE-MINUTE SPEECH TO THE NATION OCTOBER 15. REFERRING TO HIMSELF ON FOUR SEPARATE INSTANCES AS "LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION AND OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY," HEATH MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DROPPING HINTS THAT HE HAS NO INTENTION FOR THE TIME BEING OF VOLUNTARILY STEPPING DOWN.

3. HEATH'S STATEMENT WAS CAREFULLY DRAFTED AND DELIVERED IN A DISPASSIONATE, ALMOST CONVERSATIONAL TONE WITH, HOWEVER, NO LACK OF FIRMNESS OR CONVICTION. SINCE WILSON'S SPEECH WAS SO UNCONTROVERSIAL THAT IT MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN DELIVERED BY A CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN, HEATH'S LOW-KEY APPROACH WAS PERHAPS A WISE TACTICAL MOVE.

4. HEATH SAW IN WILSON'S SPEECH THE ACCEPTANCE FINALLY BY LABOR OF WHAT CONSERVATIVES (AND HE) HAD BEEN PLUGGING DURING THE CAMPAIGN: THE SERIOUSNESS OF BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY TO SOLVE IT. HE WELCOMED WILSON'S APPEAL FOR UNITY AND SUPPORTED IT, PROVIDED LABOR WAS INTERESTED IN "REALITIES" AND NOT JUST RHETORIC.

5. IN FORECASTING THE OPPOSITION ROLE FOR THE CONSERVATIVES, HEATH LEFT NO DOUBT THAT CONSERVATIVES WOULD SUP-

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R 161628Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4806

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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PORT THOSE PARTS OF LABOR'S PROGRAM AND POLICIES WHICH WOULD BE HELPFUL IN SOLVING THE NATION'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT CONSERVATIVES WOULD BE ACTING AS WATCHDOGS TO MAKE SURE THAT LABOR GOVERNMENT WAS FAITHFUL IN CARRYING OUT ITS PROMISES AND THAT IT WAS TELLING THE NATION "THE TRUTH." HE SUGGESTED FOUR OR FIVE QUESTIONS ON WHICH THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S SINCERITY WOULD BE TESTED. WHAT WAS THE LABOR GOVERNMENT REALLY DOING ABOUT 1) INFLATION, 2) WAGE INCREASES, 3) STRIKES, 4) UNEMPLOYMENT, AND 5) NATIONALIZATION? HE  
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FURTHER ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOW DO SOME-

THING POSITIVE TO REPAIR BRITAIN'S FOREIGN RELATIONSHIPS,  
PARTICULARLY IN EUROPE.

6. COMMENT: SPECULATION CONTINUES ON QUESTION OF  
HEATH'S REMAINING LEADER. A FURTHER MEETING OF THE 1922  
COMMITTEE WAS HELD OCTOBER 15 IN A RATHER SECRETIVE AT-  
MOSPHERE AND JOURNALISTS CONTINUE TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE  
IS A STRONG FEELING IN THE PARTY THAT HEATH MUST GO, AL-  
THOUGH THEY ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO WHETHER IT WILL BE SOON-  
ER OR LATER AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT HEATH'S SUCCESSOR.  
SINCE THE PRESENT COMMITTEE IS ITSELF SUBJECT TO AN E-  
LECTION BY NEWLY ELECTED AND RE-ELECTED CONSERVATIVE  
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, A POSSIBLE SCENARIO WOULD SEEM TO  
INVOLVE HEATH'S REMAINING LEADER UNTIL PARLIAMENT RECON-  
VENES OCTOBER 29 AND UNTIL THE 1922 COMMITTEE IS RECON-  
STITUTED. THIS WOULD GIVE HEATH ADDITIONAL TIME TO TAKE  
FURTHER SOUNDINGS BEFORE MAKING UP HIS MIND. END COM-  
MENT.

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